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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have today signed into law H. R. 7123, "Making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1967, and for other purposes."

In this bill, the Congress, while appropriating \$12,196,520,000 for the support of operations in Southeast Asia, has placed mandatory restrictions on the deactivation of certain airlift and troop carrier units in the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard.

The phasing out of certain of these units is part of an over-all airlift growth and modernization plan currently in progress within the Department of Defense. This involves the modernization of the active Air Force strategic inter-theater airlift capability and the re-equipment of Reserve Force elements with newer aircraft released from the active forces, the result of which will be an increased and much more efficient strategic airlift capability.

It is recognized that the trained and skilled personnel in these units are an asset to the Nation, and Secretary McNamara has advised me that he is giving personal attention to finding new ways to utilize their services consonant with the needs of modernizing our airlift force.

While similar restrictions have been included in the Defense Department Appropriations bill in recent years, I am becoming increasingly concerned about them because of the undesirable rigidity they impose on our military structure. Our defense responsibilities throughout the world require that the President, in discharging his constitutional duties as Commander-in-Chief, have maximum flexibility in determining the composition and relative strength of the active and reserve forces.

Since these restrictions are designed to take effect in fiscal year 1968, I strongly urge the Congress, in considering the regular Department of Defense appropriations bill for that year, to repeal these restrictions and to refrain from continuing other restrictions like these in the future. The President and the Congress will then be in a position to carry out, on a more appropriate basis, their respective constitutional duties with regard to the national defense.